

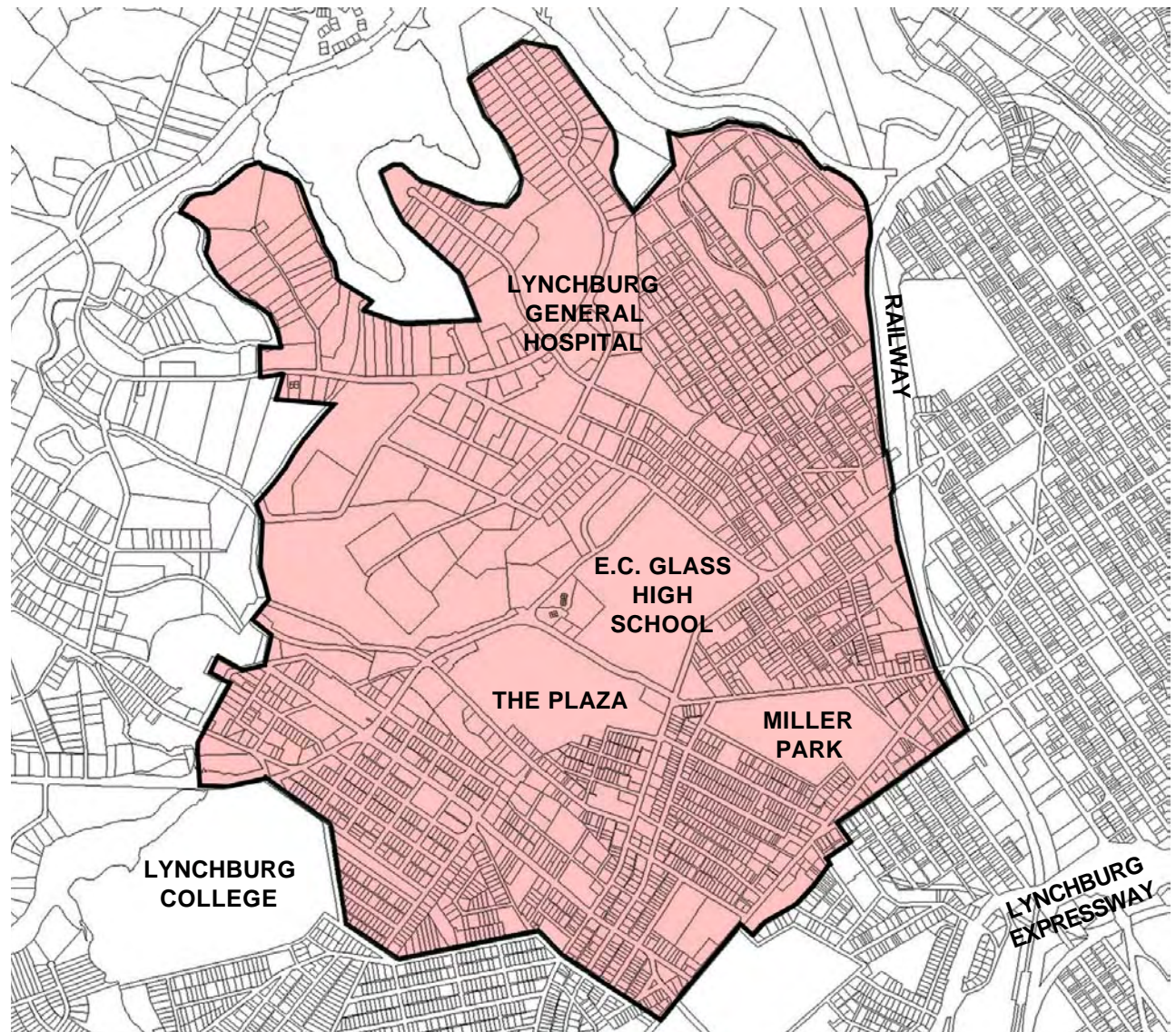
research & analysis 1

City officials decided to create a plan for the future of Midtown Lynchburg as stated in the 2002 - 2020 Comprehensive Plan. In 2004 the planning and design firm of Dover, Kohl & Partners was selected to oversee this effort. Their team included local architects, Craddock Cunningham Architectural Partners, urban economists, UrbanAdvisors, transportation experts, Hall Planning & Engineering, and a computer visualization company, UrbanAdvantage. The extensive planning process began with a thorough evaluation of the study area. This chapter details the analysis of Midtown; the chapters following describe the community charrette and resulting plan.

MIDTOWN ANALYSIS

The area of Lynchburg referred to as Midtown is bounded by the 5th Street Bridge to the east, Fort Avenue to the south, the Lakeside Drive entrance to Lynchburg College to the west, and the Blackwater Creek Trail to the north. The area is west of Downtown and is the geographic center of Lynchburg. Due to its location, natural features, history, strong institutions, businesses, neighborhoods, and physical character, Midtown is an area that deserves the best planning. We must study Midtown's past to prepare for its future, in turn creating a plan for the area which builds on its strengths and addresses its challenges.

The thorough examination of background information, whether through photographing existing conditions, talking to citizens, or analyzing base maps, helped the planning team to better prepare for creating a workable plan for Midtown.



The shaded area above denotes the Midtown study area.



Miller Home for Girls, 1872



West Lynchburg Inn, 1890



Miller Park, 1926 (dedicated in 1862)



Lynchburg General Hospital, 1956



Pittman Plaza, 1959



Memorial Avenue, 1962



Pittman Plaza, 1960



Miller Home for Girls and Sears Roebuck Store, 1958

STUDYING THE PAST

Midtown Lynchburg is an area which has experienced tremendous change over recent decades. Originally platted as an extension of Downtown neighborhoods, the area was once a country retreat area that became a thriving streetcar suburb. Miller Park was dedicated in 1862 and continues today to serve as a great community space. The Miller Home for Girls was located close-by along Memorial Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods were made up of graceful homes on tree-lined streets. The West Lynchburg Inn, a resort hotel accessible by train, was built in 1890. The Inn was purchased by Josephus Hopwood in 1903 to begin Lynchburg Christian College, later renamed as Lynchburg College.

E. C. Glass High School opened its doors in 1953 and remains strong today. The opening of Lynchburg General Hospital in 1956 provided an emerging economic engine for Midtown. The area surrounding the hospital began to expand and evolve as the medical community became a centerpiece of the city.

In 1960 Pittman Plaza opened as a major retail shopping center. Located on the site of the former Miller Home for Girls, the opening of Pittman Plaza marked the move from downtown commerce to suburban retail.

All photos provided by Nancy Marion Blackwell

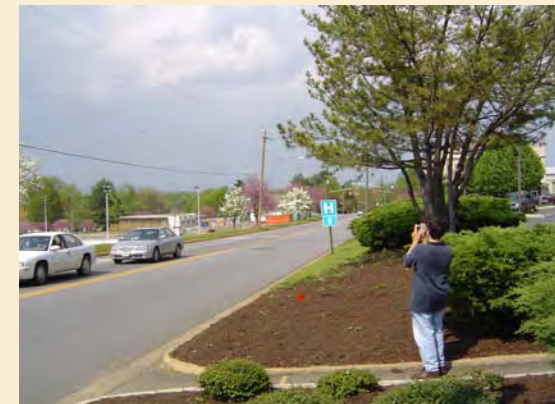
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

A variety of urban and suburban physical characteristics exist in the Midtown area and the team focused its efforts on documenting such examples. Walking or driving the study area, team members photographed corridors, neighborhoods, civic buildings, and open spaces to document the existing conditions of Midtown.

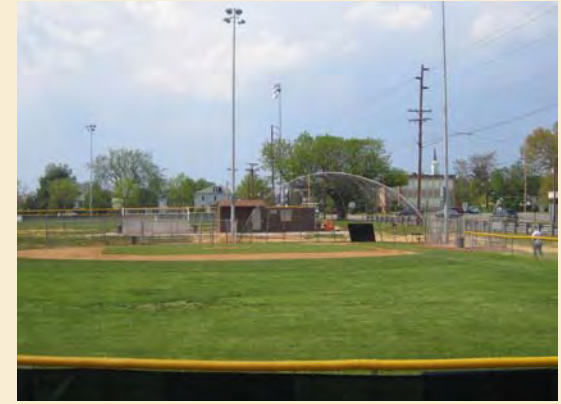
THE PLAZA



LYNCHBURG GENERAL HOSPITAL



MILLER PARK

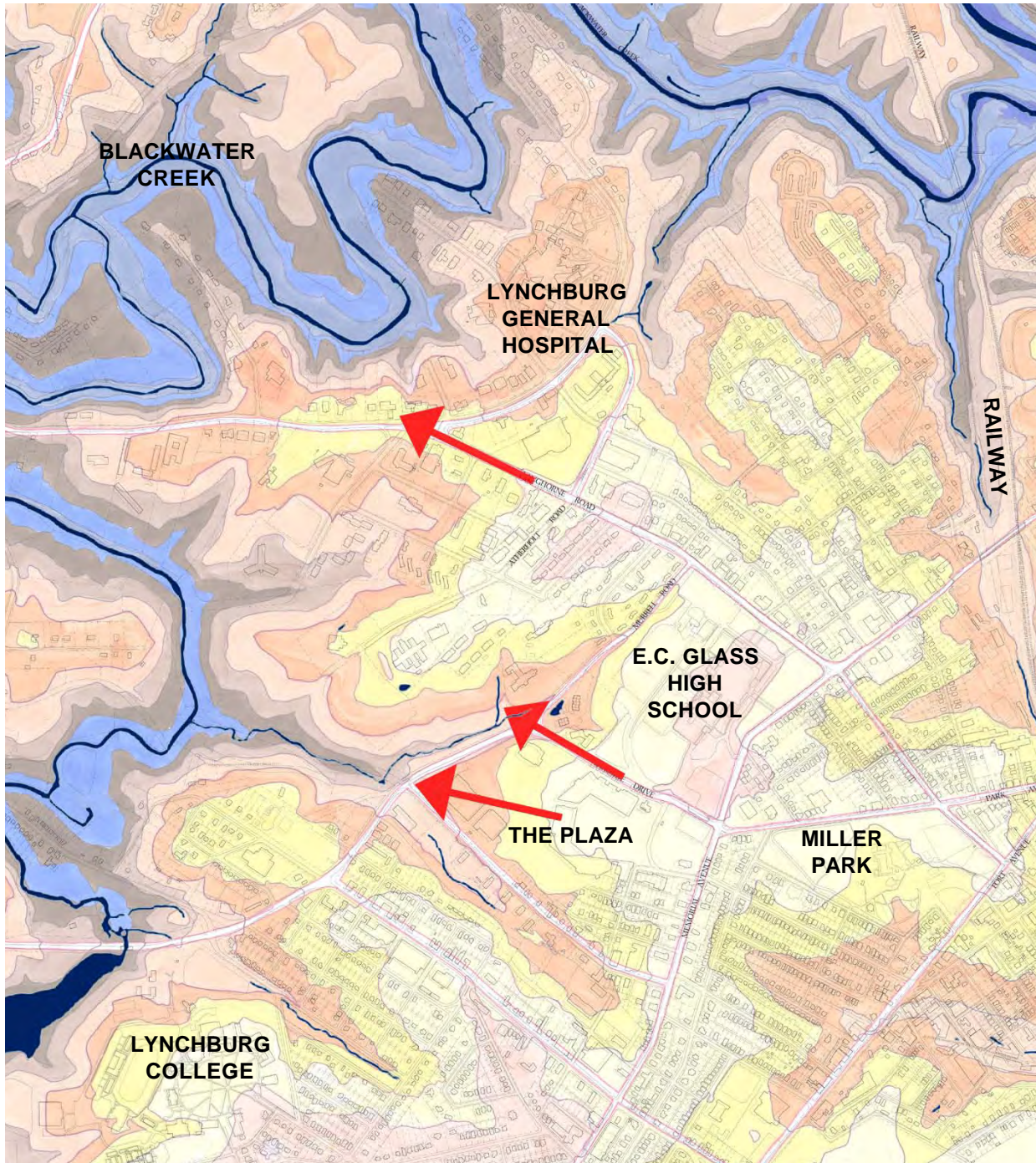


CORRIDORS



NEIGHBORHOODS





Analysis Diagrams*

In addition to photographing the study area, the team analyzed past studies of the area, the City's zoning code, recent development proposals, police crime data, and other relevant background information. Using the City's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, the team created a series of analysis diagrams to better understand the dynamics of the planning area.

Topography and View Corridors

The terrain of Midtown is that of sweeping hills and mountainous views. The planning team paid particular attention to the topography of the study area, emphasizing that design must be respectful of the natural environment. The diagram at left highlights areas of various slopes based on 10 foot contour lines. The lighter shades represent higher elevations with darker shades representing lower elevations. The arrows denote spectacular views towards the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Streams and Lakes

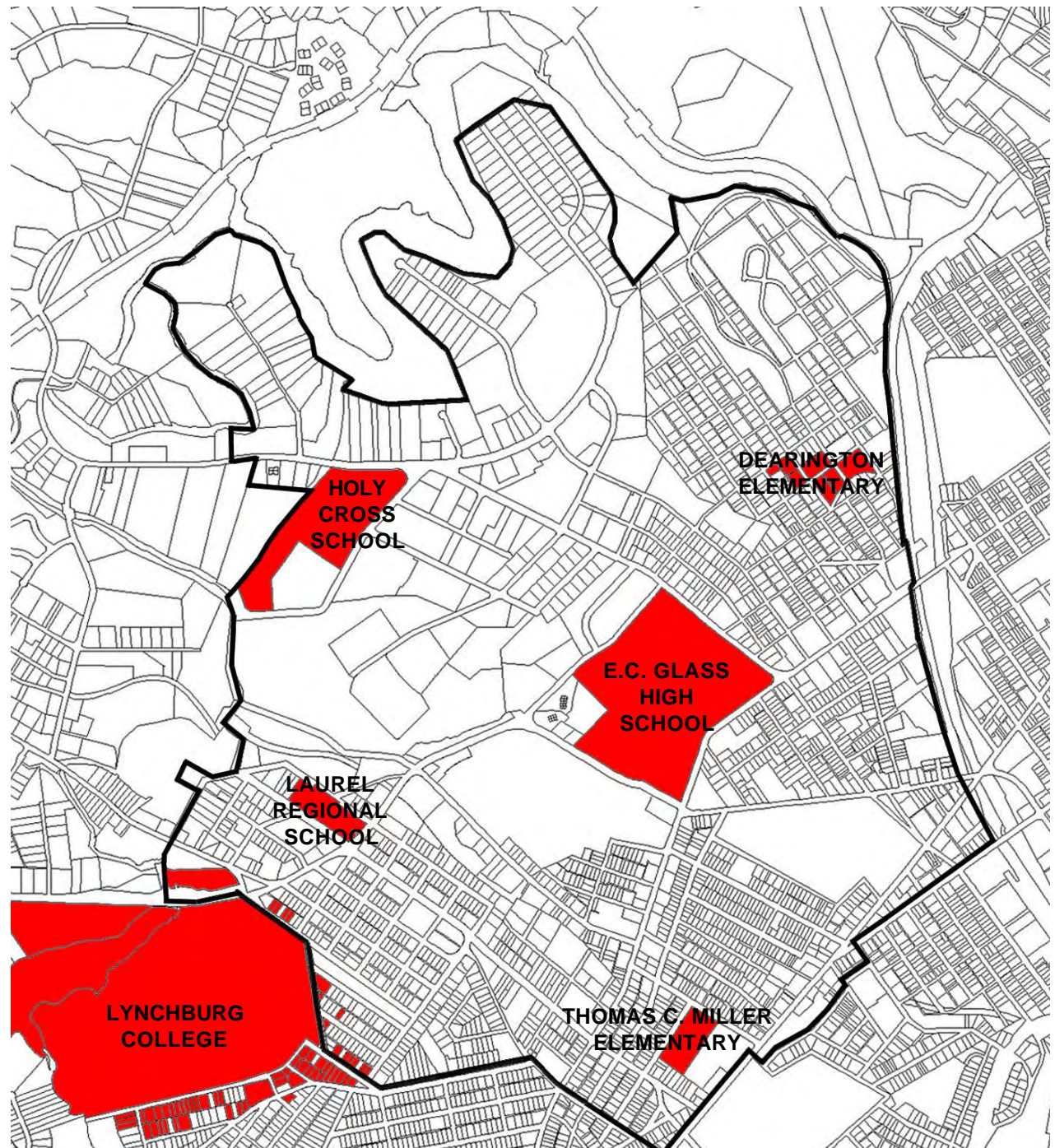
An analysis of water features in the study area reveals that there is an extensive stream and lake system within Midtown. From Blackwater Creek to the lake at Lynchburg College, a network of streams moves water throughout the area. The analysis of such water features will help to ensure that existing and proposed development drains properly to the natural water bodies. More importantly, as development occurs it is extremely important to cleanse and treat stormwater before it enters the network of streams and lakes. The plan for Midtown includes both physical and natural mechanisms to provide for adequate drainage as well as water purification and cleansing.

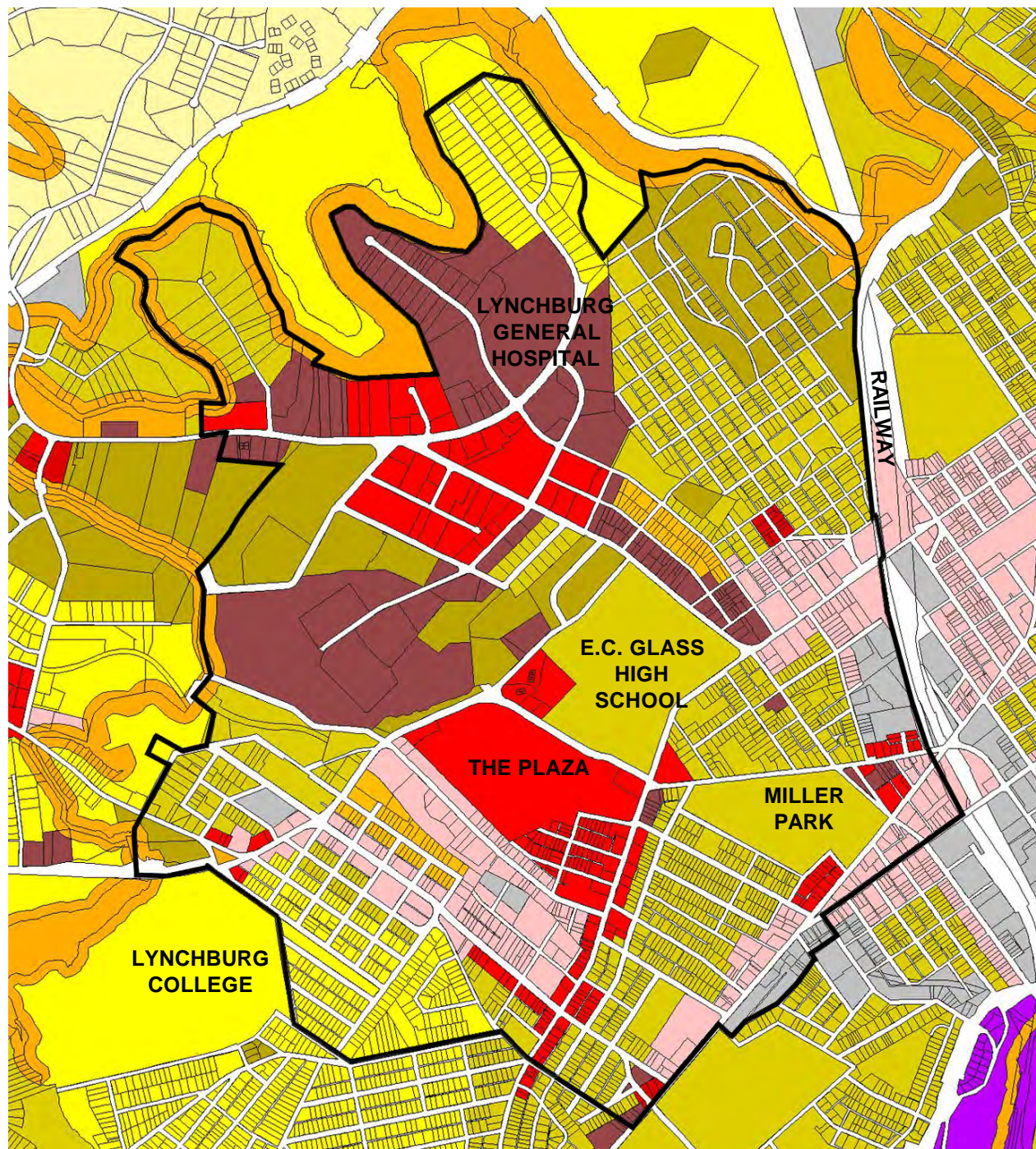
* The analysis diagrams are based on April 2005 GIS information provided by the City of Lynchburg. This information is updated from time to time; any inconsistencies should be brought to the attention of the City.

Analysis Diagrams

Places of Learning and Education Centers

Midtown Lynchburg has a variety of places of learning which serve the community. This diagram identifies four elementary and secondary schools and one college, Lynchburg College, all located in Midtown.





Zoning



Parcels in Midtown represent a broad spectrum of zoning classifications. The majority of parcels are zoned R-3 (medium density two-family residential district), while business districts are interspersed.

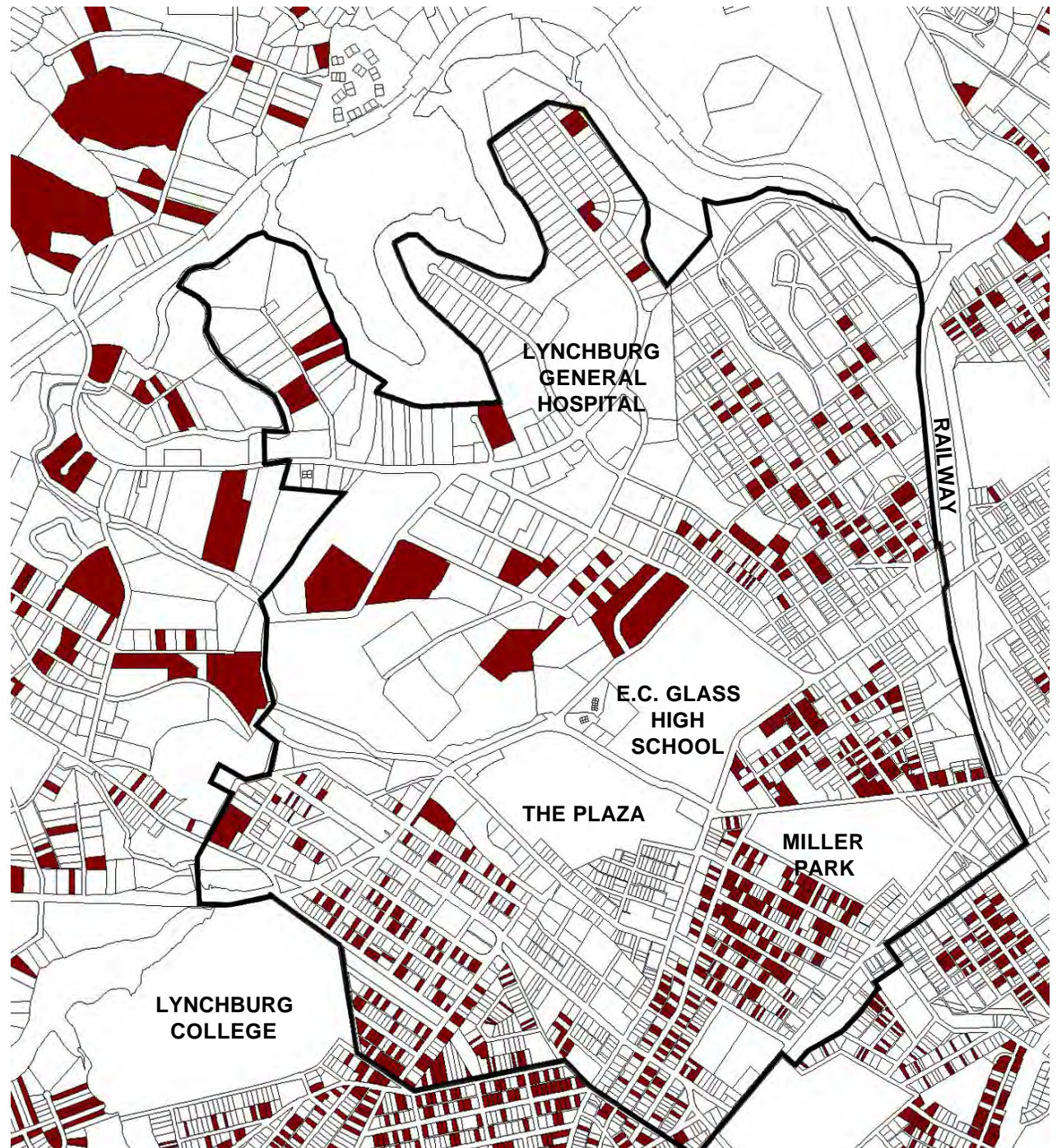


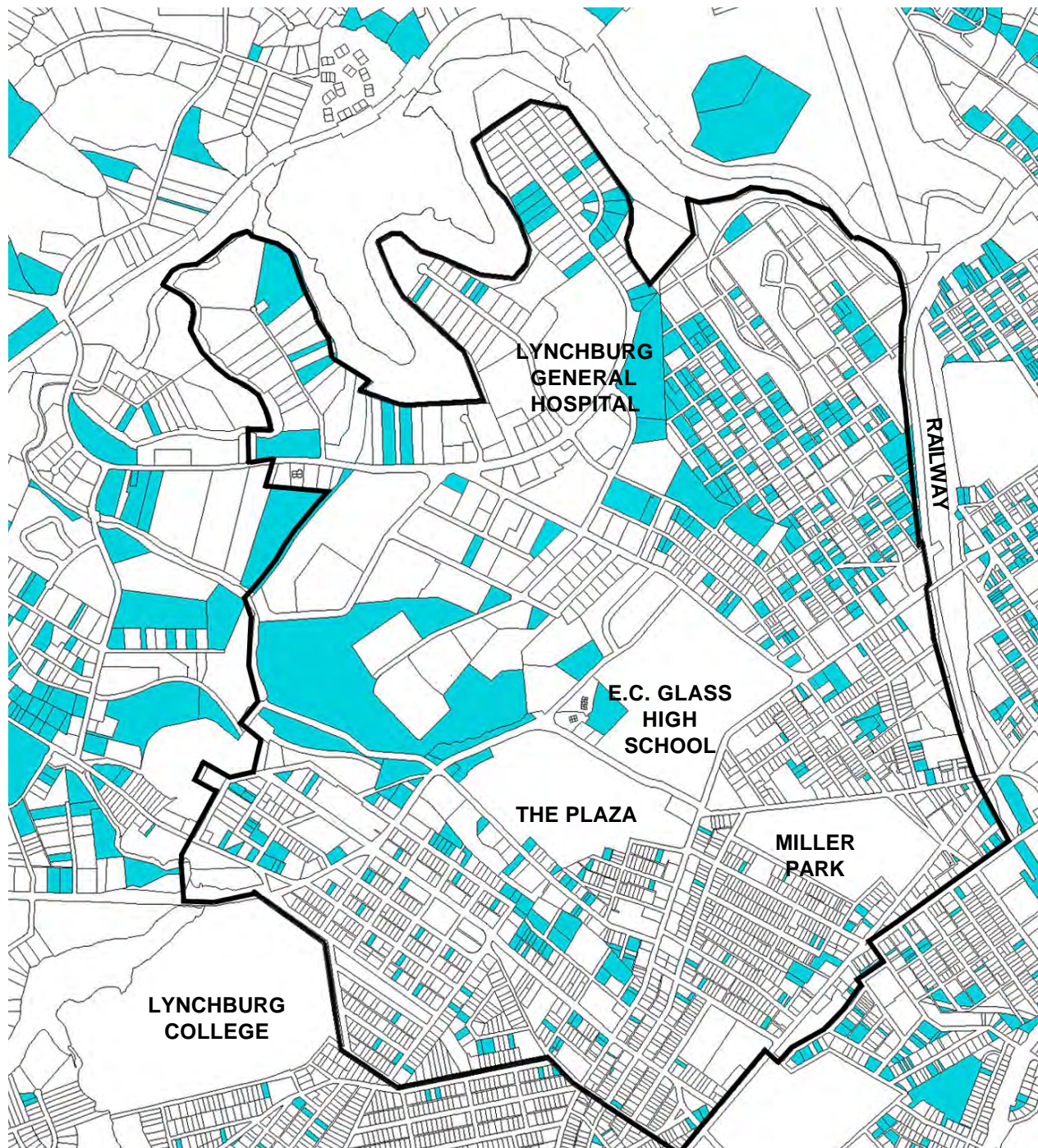
Analysis Diagrams

Owner and Renter Occupied

Midtown Lynchburg contains a mix of owner and rental occupied single family housing. The neighborhoods surrounding Miller Park show a “piano key” pattern of owner occupied housing interspersed with rental units.

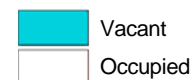
Rental Property 
Owner Occupied 





Vacant Parcels

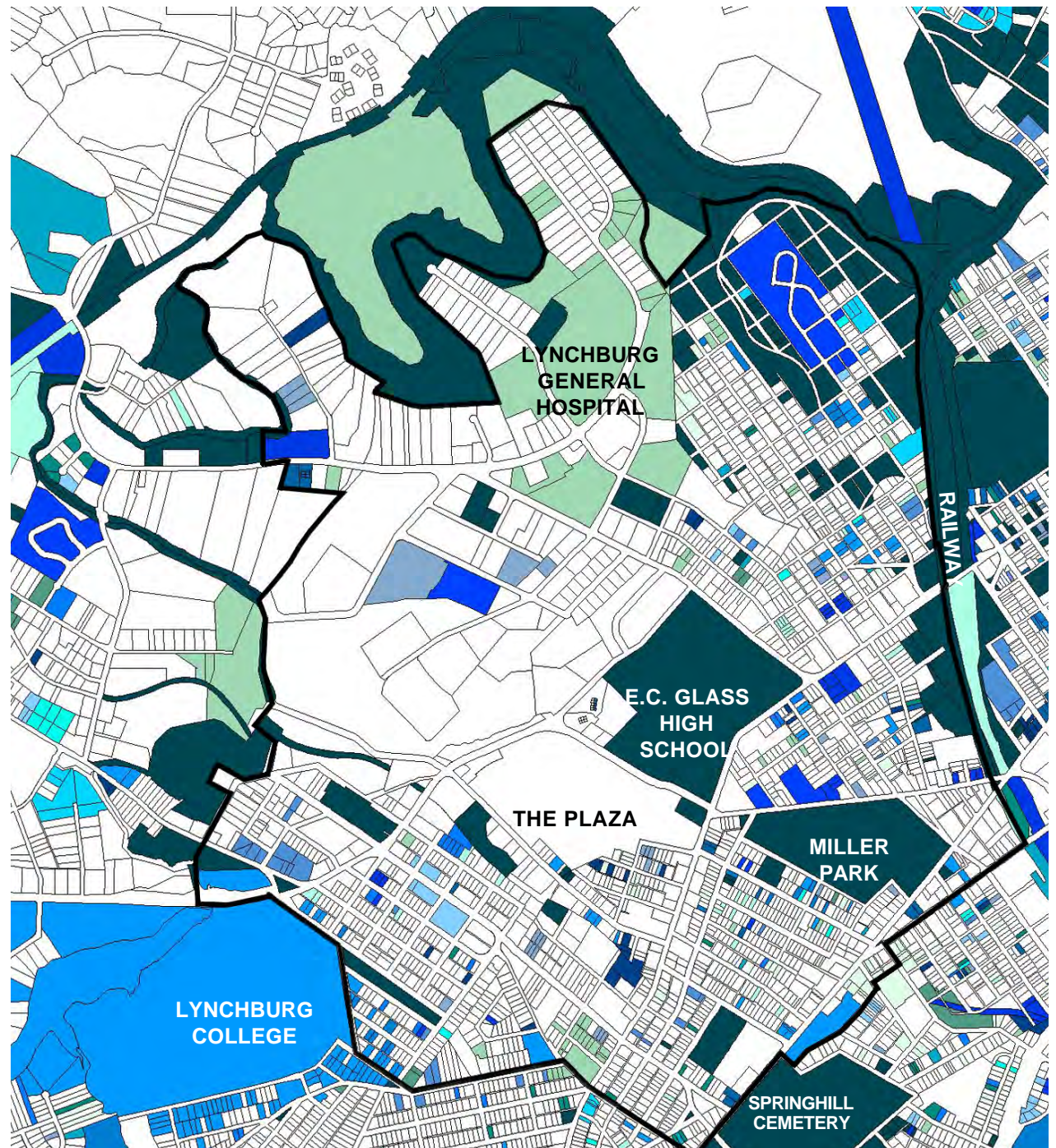
Based on GIS data provided by the City, the parcels noted in blue are classified as currently being vacant. These properties represent opportunity sites for infill development.

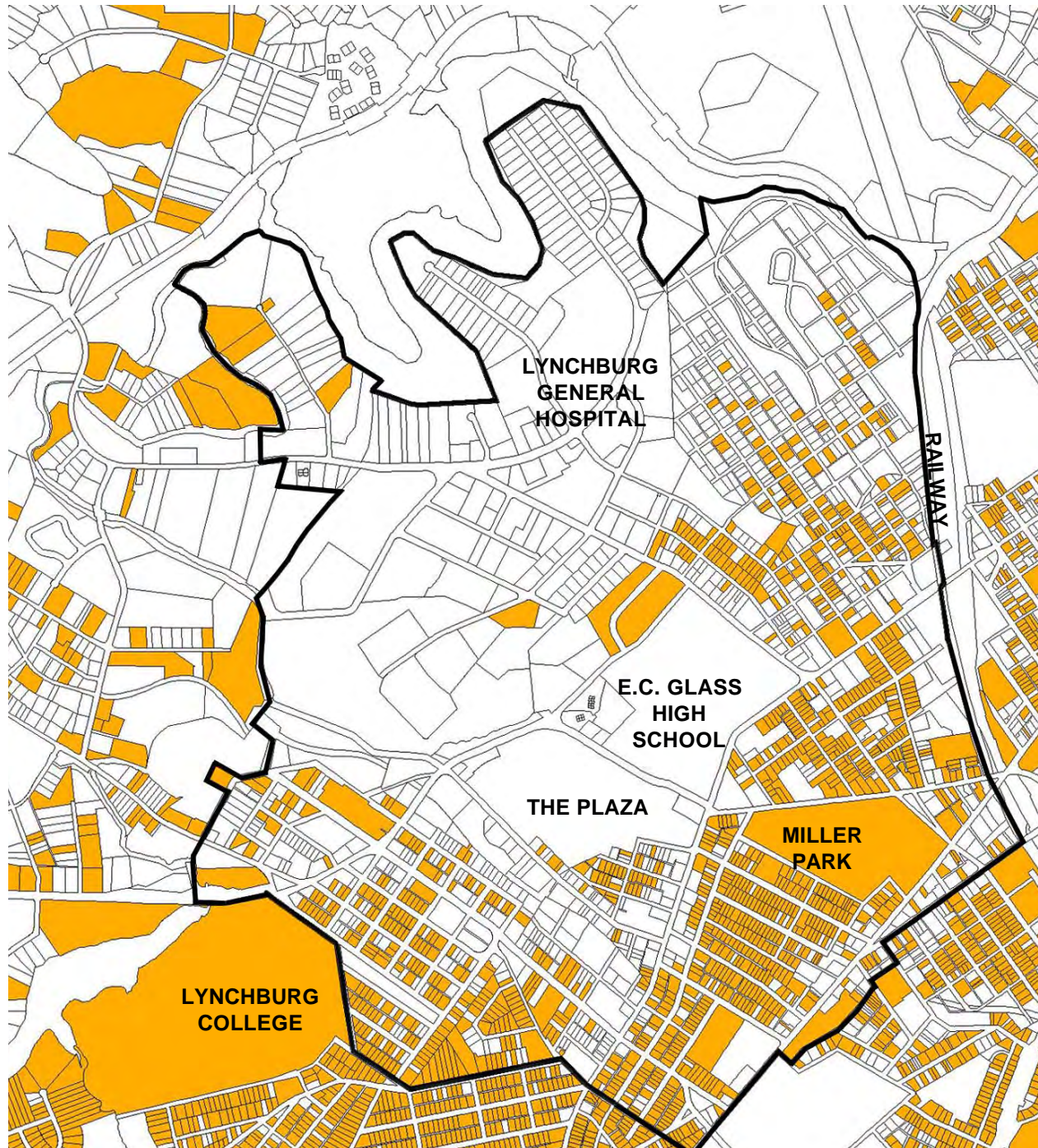


Analysis Diagrams

Property Ownership (5 or more parcels)

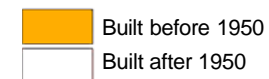
The property ownership diagram highlights multiple properties owned by the same landowners. The purpose of this diagram is to identify any large assemblies of land where substantial infill development could occur.





Building Construction



The housing and building stock of Midtown Lynchburg is fairly old. A majority of properties located within the study area were built prior to 1950. This analysis reveals the opportunities for historic preservation, as well as rehabilitation or redevelopment based on building conditions.

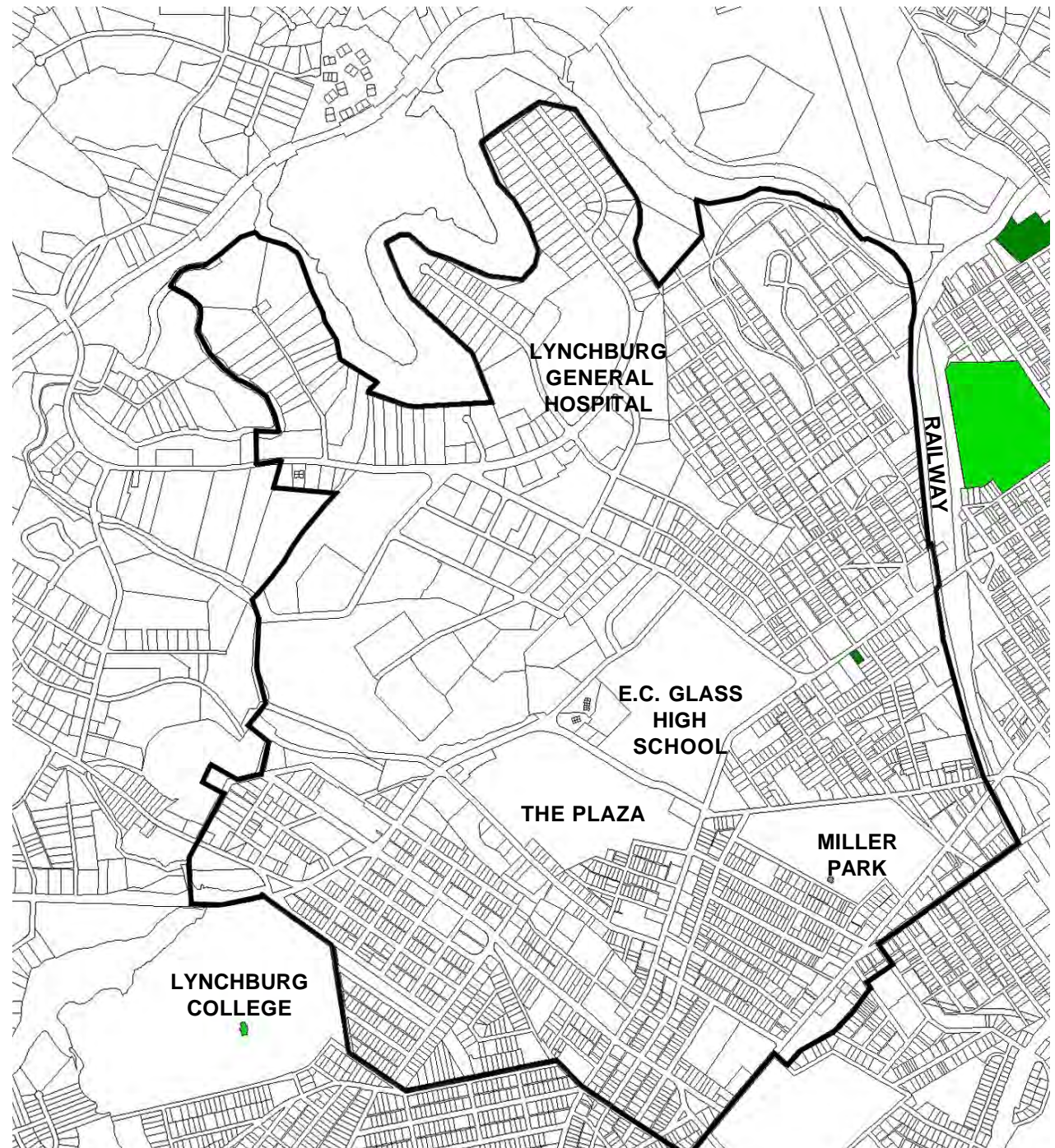


Analysis Diagrams

Historic Districts

The parcels delineated in shades of green are those which are designated in either a city or state historic district. Based on the previous diagram of building construction, Midtown contains a large number of buildings built prior to 1950. The age, quality, and character of the architecture is of real value; it can be guaranteed and preserved for generations to come through historic district designation. For this reason, the establishment of one or many historic districts should be considered for Midtown's neighborhoods.

Local Historic District 
State/National Historic District 

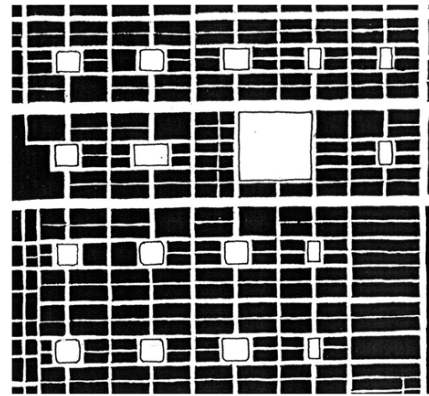


Scale Comparisons

These scale comparisons helped the planners and community participants to better understand the scale of Midtown in relation to other great places. Below is the Plaza at the same scale as other well known towns and universities. The scale comparisons give light to the great development possibilities that could be achieved on the Plaza site.



The Plaza



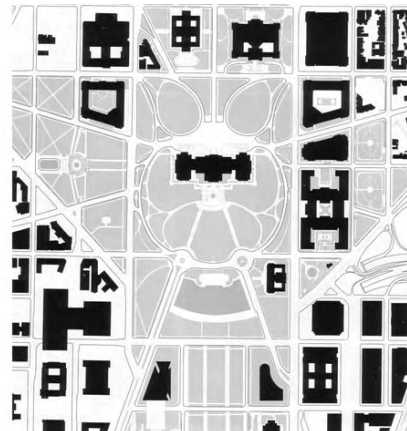
Savannah, GA



Colonial Williamsburg, VA



The Plaza



The Mall, Washington, D.C.

Credit: Ayers Saint Gross



Virginia Tech Drill Field

Credit: Ayers Saint Gross



Credit: Ayers Saint Gross

University of Virginia Lawn

PRELIMINARY ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

At the start of the planning process UrbanAdvisors, urban economists, reviewed the economic components of the City of Lynchburg 2002-2020 Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Master Plan, and supporting documents previously produced by Economic Research Associates (ERA). Supplementary data on the City of Lynchburg and the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) were collected and reviewed. UrbanAdvisors assisted with stakeholder interviews during the March and April 2005 site visits to better understand resident and business concerns and incorporate local intelligence.

The City's Comprehensive Plan 2002-2020 observes that new housing in the surrounding counties has been growing at a greater rate than in the City. One explanation suggested by a local real estate professional is that there is an insufficient supply of adequate middle-income housing available in the City. This observation is supported by the larger proportion of low and high-income households captured by the City and the lower proportion of middle-income households (see Table 1.1 and 1.2). Together, this suggests that there is latent demand for quality middle income housing opportunities close to amenities in the City, including the Midtown Area. The new neighborhood of Wyndhurst and the Downtown loft units prove that there is a market for new housing types in Lynchburg for middle and upper income resident who choose to live in neighborhoods designed as traditional urban developments.

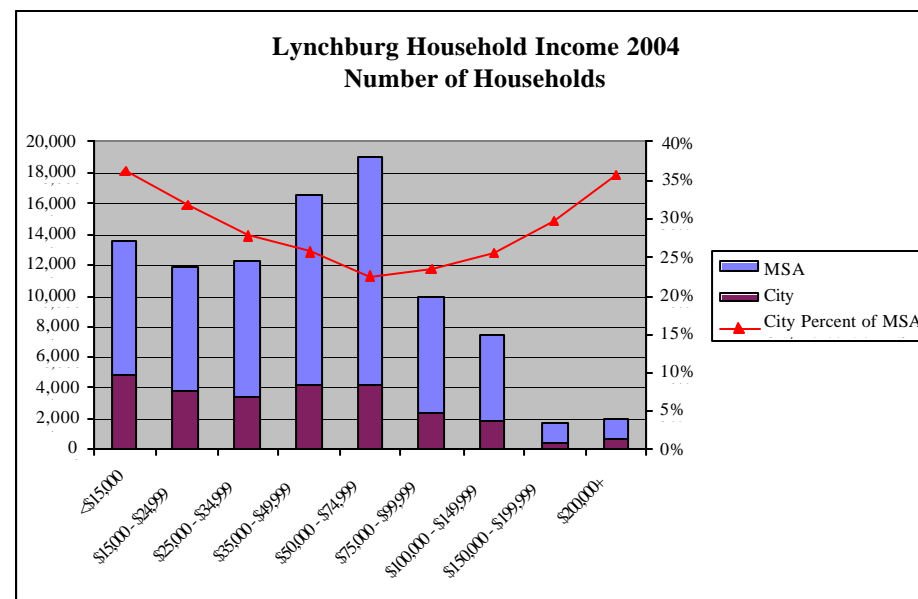


Table 1.1 Demographic trends for both the city and MSA suggest growth in the number of households with incomes over \$100,000 annually. (Source: ESRI BIS, and UrbanAdvisors Ltd)

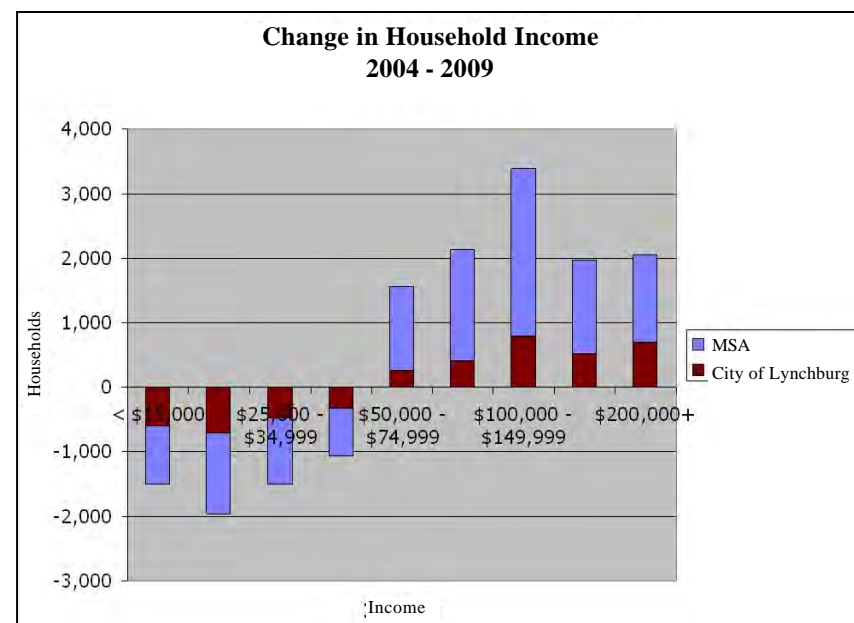


Table 1.2 Household incomes are increasing in the MSA and within the City, however the majority of households with higher incomes are locating outside of the City. This shows that there is a gap in the Lynchburg housing market where increased housing options and opportunities could attract a wider range of households. (Source: ESRI BIS, and UrbanAdvisors Ltd)